

any scene, while the rest remained 'dumb faces', it was a great artistic economy temporarily to hand over one of the main characters in this way to a super. Certainly our modern drama, free from this accidental restriction, has seldom drawn such eloquence from dumbness. The silence of the ghost in *Hamlet*, or of the midnight in *Macbeth*; of Iago, when his guilt is laid open, or of Hermione, when she comes back like Alcestris to a husband unworthy of her innocence; of Cordelia in *Lear* or of Virgilia, 'my gracious silence', in *Coriolanus*—all these are faint compared with Aeschylus. Indeed, beside the Greeks, we with our shouting stage-crowds, our alarums and excursions, are like Homer's Trojans, marching with their barbarous uproar against the disciplined hush of the Achaean host.

And yet on the stage of life, at all events, the dramatic value of silence has been fully re-discovered by some of our Romantics. The great of the eighteenth century had already come to despise laughter, so that Fontenelle could say disdainfully *je ne fais jamais ah-ah-ah*, and Lord Chesterfield could not recollect having given way to it 'since I had the use of my reason'. Early in the nineteenth century Lord Byron went on to despise even speech. He was, indeed, perpetually torn between the rival splendours of proud rhetoric and of prouder silence, until he found the last for ever in the earth of

Missolonghi:

Mute,
The camel labours with the heaviest load
And the wolf dies in silence—not bestowed
In vain should such example be; if they,
Things of ignoble or of savage mood,
Endure and shrink not, we of nobler clay,
May temper it to bear—it is but for a day.
Nor, again, was it in Shelley*s mind
only that the
suffering Titan with his lips proudly
locked rose again